



SOCIAL PARTNERS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING: FROM POLICY DEVELOPMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION

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SOCIAL PARTNERS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING: FROM POLICY DEVELOPMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION

REFLECTIONS ON THE ETF 2008
POLICY LEARNING EXERCISE IN
CROATIA, THE FORMER YUGOSLAV
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, SERBIA
AND TURKEY

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European Training Foundation
2009*

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PREFACE

THE 2008 PEER LEARNING PROJECT

Social partners are key players in the development of vocational education and training (VET), and this view is widely supported in the EU and its Member States. However, involving them is easier said than done. The transition economies of South Eastern Europe are only slowly recovering; most companies are fragile and have mainly short-term visions and perspectives. Since investment in education and training is focused on longer-term results, companies and the social partners do not see it as a high priority. How can the general idea of promoting social partnership in South Eastern Europe be given shape, and should social partners be involved in all parts of the policy design and policy development processes?

Between 2002 and 2005 the ETF launched the peer review programme for South Eastern Europe. Its main aim was to provide policy recommendations to national policymakers. In addition, it attempted to contribute to capacity building and regional networking. From 2006 to 2008 the ETF moved the focus from peer review to peer learning. The main objective was to contribute to the capacity building of national stakeholders through in-depth analysis and comparisons of education and training systems and policies in different countries.

In 2006 the peer learning project concentrated on the financing of VET in Albania, Kosovo¹ and Montenegro. Four peer policymakers and four peer VET experts from Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro gained, through interviews and

discussions with national stakeholders and among peers, a deeper understanding of the differences in the financing of VET in Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro, but also of the similarities in the problems faced and, also in a few cases, in the chosen policy options.

In 2007 the project focused on the impact of VET policies on schools and school management in Albania, Kosovo and Turkey. One policymaker, one school director from a donor-supported pilot school and one school director from a non-pilot school identified, among other issues, the need for early consultation with stakeholders in policy development in order to reduce the gap between policy development and policy implementation.

In 2008 one policymaker, one representative of employers' organisations and one of trade unions in Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey participated as peers. The topic was to better understand the policies and practices relating to the involvement of social partners in education and training with a focus on the tourism and construction sectors. A coordinator was appointed for these countries to coordinate the self-study and the preparations for the peer visits.

The authors of this report have concluded that social dialogue on education and training is taking place in all countries at national level, but is for the most part absent in negotiations of collective agreements. Croatia and Turkey are developing initiatives to strengthen tripartite discussions at the level of economic sectors. In most countries social partners have been involved in the education process, particularly in developing

¹ As under UNSCR 1244.

occupational standards and assessing new curricula. Only in Serbia are employers participating more systematically in examination committees. Partnerships between schools and local enterprises exist and have in many cases outlived the transition process. These partnerships are strongly focused on the provision of practical training. It will be a challenge to extend the areas of cooperation. Governments should actively support such cooperation. A critical issue is the human and financial resources available for involving social partners in the different phases of the education and training process. It is unrealistic to expect that social partners will be able to participate in all phases. Capacity building for social partner organisations is crucial. It is equally important for social partners to explicitly prioritise their involvement and concentrate on areas in which their participation will be most effective and efficient.

This report elaborates the rich experience of the team involved in the ETF 2008 peer learning exercise. The ETF peer learning instrument has proved to be a very powerful learning tool for all the peers involved. Comparing success stories, failures and mistakes, and sharing experiences has helped them to better comprehend the local contexts in which reforms are taking place and the reasons why policy initiatives seem to work better under certain circumstances. It has led to more questions than answers, though these questions can help the peers to deal with daily problems. It was therefore considered very important to share this learning with a much broader group of interested people in the education field. This was accomplished during a regional conference in Ohrid in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on 1–2 December 2008, an event that involved some 60 policymakers and social partner representatives from across the region. This report, which heavily reflects the very rich discussions of the peers over ten days in Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey, should also be considered as an instrument for knowledge sharing.

In order to address the criticism² that the peer learning project only had a one-year life cycle, and an uncertain follow-up and impact on the policies in the countries, it has been decided to integrate peer learning actions into a new mutual learning project to run from 2009 to 2011. With a three-year commitment and focus on adult learning, quality and post-secondary VET, it is hoped that better links can be forged between peer learning and both policy processes and the investments of international donors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The 2008 peer team consisted of:

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- Ana Buljan – Deputy Director of the Agency for Vocational Education and Training, Croatia
- Damir Crleni – President of the Croatian Culinary Federation, Croatia
- Nenad Vakanjac – Consultant, National Coordinator, Croatia
- Violeta Grujevska – Director of VET Centre, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Elizabeta Jovanovska-Radovanik – Adviser, VET Centre, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Filip Majeovski – Head of Marketing Department, Metropole Lake Resort, Ohrid, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Pavel Trendafilov – President of the Construction Trade Union SGIP, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Vesna Janevska – VET Consultant, National Coordinator, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

² See the article in ETF Yearbook 2008, 'ETF peer learning: from policy learning to policy change in partner countries', by Margareta Nikolovska and Arjen Vos, where the peer learning experience from 2006 and 2007 was evaluated.

- Silva Misljenovic – Adviser and HRD Coordinator, Ministry of Education and Sports, Serbia
- Zoran Pualic – Adviser, Serbian Association of Employers, Serbia
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- David Parkes – Consultant, UK/France, EU Expert
- Margareta Nikolovska – Project Team Member and Country Manager for Albania, ETF

- Arjen Vos – Project Team Leader and Country Manager for Turkey, ETF.

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We would like to thank the whole team for taking part in intensive discussions, conducted in a very open, friendly and professional way. These discussions were a very rich learning experience for us all.

*Arjen Vos
and Margareta Nikolovska, ETF*

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1. INTRODUCTION: PEER LEARNING IN 2008 AS PART OF THE ETF POLICY LEARNING AGENDA IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

1

The role of the ETF in the reform process in South Eastern Europe is to facilitate policy learning by making available expertise, information and experience of policies and practice in education and training through participatory processes of stakeholder interaction. To this end the ETF applies the principle of policy learning in countries through the involvement of policymakers and senior officials from the sector as peers in order to create the conditions for better targeted capacity building (ETF, 2008).

One of the tools used by the ETF for policy learning is peer learning, which is organised as a regional activity in South Eastern Europe and covers the candidate countries and potential candidate countries. In 2008 the ETF's peer learning project was organised around the broader topic of the 'Involvement of Social Partners in Education and Training'. This involved

peers from the four countries – Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey – with the aim of developing an understanding of the involvement of social partners in VET, with a focus on the construction and tourism sectors.

Why has peer learning been chosen as a policy learning instrument for the topic of social partner involvement in education and training? In Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey the roles and contributions of social partners in the education and training system vary substantially. Many different approaches have been identified. The modes of cooperation and the ways of resolving challenges are the result of the different traditions and cultures in each country, and reflect to a great extent the differences in the organisation of the national education and training systems.

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In such a situation the peer learning tool provides ample opportunity for countries and individuals to learn from one another, and is a useful instrument for assisting stakeholders to work for and achieve sustainable change in their education and VET systems. The following sets of issues have been used to classify the findings of the ETF 2008 peer learning exercise.

- A. **Social dialogue:** What are the main issues for dialogue between government and social partners in education and training? Which are topics of common interest, and which are conflicting interests? What is the right balance of social dialogue at national, regional, local and (economic) sector levels?
- B. **Education and training practice:** Are there examples of good practice in social partner involvement in specific areas, such as labour market needs assessment, qualification development, curriculum development, practical training, quality assurance, and examination/certification? What advice can be given to policymakers, employers' organisations and trade unions on realistic strategies for increasing their involvement at different levels?
- C. **School–enterprise relations:** What are the areas of common interest, and what examples are there of good practice?

It is important to note that the concept of policy learning has been used within the framework of the challenges faced by policymakers and other key stakeholders in VET reform. These stakeholders are increasingly looking beyond their borders seeking information, examples of good practice and policy or peer advice in order to launch, develop or implement new policies in the national context. One way of developing awareness of the importance of key issues in education and training is to enable policymakers to meet, talk with and hear from people who are or have been involved in developing strategies for or implementing these policy issues.

In addressing these issues the approach has been one of policy learning based on the ETF peer learning methodology³.

In summary, the ETF peer learning methodology is based on the following process.

- A common issue for policy learning is identified in cooperation with the countries involved. In this case the issue of common interest was the involvement of social partners in education and training.
- Country background papers are prepared by the participants in the form of a 'self-study' document.
- Two concept papers are elaborated on the selected topic for peer learning, one on the concept and topic (*Peer Learning to support the VET Reform Process 2008*, Thematic Concept Paper, Niels Kristensen), and the second on the rationale and methodology of peer learning (*Peer Learning 2008: Guide for Preparation*, ETF).
- Peer learning events are organised in the participating countries.
- Dissemination activities are organised in various forms, including articles, country workshops and regional conferences.

The ETF 2008 peer learning exercise on the involvement of social partners in education and training was a tool for engaging stakeholders in policy learning and for reinforcing stakeholders' capacity to develop and implement systemic education and training reform policies rather than pilot projects. As such, it proved to be a suitable and flexible instrument that recognised that policy learning may be more effective than policy recommendations in report form, in situations where the objective is to strengthen the capacity of policymakers and VET experts to develop and implement policies. This document, which is the cross-country synthesis report of the current state of affairs and the findings of the peer learning exercise, is a result of this comprehensive methodology.

³ For further information on the ETF peer learning methodology see Nikolovska and Vos (2008).

1. INTRODUCTION: PEER LEARNING IN 2008 AS PART OF THE ETF POLICY LEARNING AGENDA IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

The cross-country report is organised into sections dealing with the following issues:

- what is meant by social partnership and what its intended benefits are;
- the importance of international and national contexts;
- the labour market context;
- the local level;
- policies and strategies as defined by legislation, finance and institutional structures as well as the location of decision making and management of change.

Sections 1–11 provide the introduction, a short summary, the core text and conclusions and recommendations. The annexes contain a case study of each of the countries that took part in this peer learning exercise.

Moreover, social dialogue, education and training practice, and school–enterprise relations are cross-cutting issues for this report. Reference is also made to the labour market context and to issues of education and training practice, while the local context is covered in the section on school–enterprise relations.

The section entitled ‘Policy learning to facilitate educational change with social partners: The role of the government’ is a symbolic section. Reviewing policy implementation and trying to explore across four countries the extent to which policy learning can support organisational change – in this case in the education sector – would be a year’s dedicated

project on its own. This short section, therefore, flags up the issue rather than attempting to resolve it.

The influence of each country’s situation and of the peers themselves (representing the social partners in tourism and construction and a policy influencer from each country) is a clear thread running through this report.

Good practice is illustrated throughout the text, though most of the examples are presented in the country case studies in the annexes. The exploration of policy, strategic implementation and actual practice through the peer learning process suggests that the problems and dilemmas faced stem mainly from policy and strategy (top-down) rather than from practice (bottom-up). This factor influences the conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore, some conclusions might appear to be rather general. They are included because policy implementation has not adequately followed policy design. Many issues at policy level are still more rhetoric than real action.

This document will hopefully help to illuminate the issues as well as being evidence of the insights and reflections of the peers. As the final outcome of the ETF 2008 peer learning process, it should also be seen as a possible tool for supporting the capacity of stakeholders to formulate and implement systemic education reform policies, where the added value is the participation of social partners in the reform agenda of each country.

2. RATIONALE: POLICY PROCESS AND PRACTICE

2

The long-term project objective for the ETF is to support the quality of policy design and implementation by facilitating policy learning and peer learning by key stakeholders in the education and training reform processes in South Eastern Europe. Intensive and structured discussions among policymakers, experts and practitioners, comparative analysis, and the sharing of knowledge, experience and examples of good practice are the powerful tools of policy learning.

The ETF's role in reform in South Eastern Europe is to facilitate policy learning by making instruments and resources available for education and training, and by assisting and guiding the participation and interaction of stakeholders. ETF peer learning is based on the principle of a learning platform carefully created and facilitated around major policy issues of concern to participating countries. The involvement of policymakers and VET experts and practitioners as peers creates the conditions for better targeted capacity building regarding existing policies and policy outcomes.

Peer learning can be used with different stakeholders as long as they have similar functions and experience. The primary objectives for the 2008 project were:

- to engage policymakers and social partners in a policy learning activity, with shared knowledge and analysis of sector dialogues and companies' involvement in training (particularly in the tourism and construction sectors) in Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey;
- to contribute to improved policy and EU project design and implementation by drawing lessons from the 2008 peer learning exercise;
- to promote improved stakeholder discussions in sector dialogues and companies' involvement in training, again using the tourism and construction sectors in the participating countries to illustrate the general picture; these sectors have been selected because they are key for all four economies and are relatively open and vulnerable to international competition.

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In this context the ETF 2008 initiative should be seen as a process that enables the policymakers and social partners of the peer learning team:

- to participate in a policy learning exercise through interaction with key stakeholders in the host country, and within the peer learning team itself;
- to gain an understanding of the host country's policy problems with regard to the involvement of social partners in VET and qualification development, and to appreciate how this relates to the policy problems in their own country;
- to exchange opinions and obtain direct feedback from the experience of others in relation to the links between sector dialogue and companies' involvement in training, and education and training policy;

- to reflect on the potential relevance of the policy/programme/problem elaborated in the 'self-study' document.

The most important stage of the exercise was the selection of the policy issue: in the case of 2008 it was the involvement of social partners in education and training. The choice of policy issue is vital for linking peer learning to policy discussions in the different countries and for stimulating the interest of the peers representing social partners and of policymakers from the education ministries. The common denominator is the rationale of 'appraisal' that is firmly embedded in practice. This is how the ETF peer learning methodology approaches the practical aspect of the policy process, observed through the lens of a problem which is very relevant to the policy agenda.

3. SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE: A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES

3

Social dialogue and consultation are key elements of the European model of society. The Treaty of the European Union⁴ recognises this by giving the European Commission the task of promoting social dialogue, and provides for consultation of the European social partners on any social initiative. Social partnership is seen as an institutionalised instrument for better governance and the promotion of social and economic reforms.

The role played by social partnership is also associated with democratic, social and economic progress. Employers, employees and government authorities generally view social dialogue as a tool for decision making and conflict resolution that can secure stable development benefiting all parties who have a justified stake in society and the economy.

As a consequence, the concept of social partnership is embedded in the legislation

of both the European Community and individual EU Member States. In principle, it ensures that employers' and employees' organisations (and perhaps local government) participate alongside central government to determine key economic and social policies and pursue their strategic implementation.

All four of the countries that took part in the ETF 2008 peer learning exercise – Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey – are still trying to move towards fully open societies, with governments who are making efforts to gradually shift from a bureaucratic and authority-based system to a more transparent and inclusive approach to decision-making processes. This gradual shift has concomitant implications for social partner involvement in various aspects of society, including education and training policies.

⁴ *Treaty on European Union*, Articles 138 and 139 (ex 118a and 118b).

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Political turbulence and changes of government and legislation have led, particularly in the Western Balkan countries, to a lack of systemic planning and a lack of sustainability in terms of the initiatives taken. At government level, including social partnership, inter-ministerial cooperation requires considerable reinforcement.

Social partners are suffering from relatively low membership rates, a situation that calls into question their representativeness. Their organisation at local or sector level is often weak. Social partnership tends to be focused on bipartite and tripartite arrangements. Moreover, just as globalisation and financial crises will have their impact on the two sectors chosen for the peer learning exercise – construction and tourism – so too will they have an impact on the notion of social partnership in terms of extending the range of partners to be consulted (for example to local government and NGOs). The social partner organisations (for VET) require greater commitment, a sharper focus on the key issues, considerable capacity building and the financial means in order to participate fully.

Institutional mechanisms (such as economic councils, VET councils, occupational sector councils, national qualification frameworks, and VET agencies and centres) do have social partner involvement, and are evolving, though social partners (in South Eastern Europe) still feel they are ignored or marginalised when it comes to critical decisions. Because it is a complex sector,

particularly in its interaction with the labour market, overall financing for VET sometimes lacks transparency, and there is a tendency to create institutions with wide responsibilities but without the means to achieve them (such as VET centres)⁵.

Social partner involvement exists at local level in schools, training centres and enterprises, with both public and private initiatives and with cooperation between employers and trade unions. Occasionally there is the temptation to judge successes at local level to have occurred in spite of, rather than because of, government interventions. Some of the recommendations below suggest the need to broaden or reinforce cooperation beyond providing work placements and practical training for students, and to develop permanent units for professional and training needs analysis and forecasting, in order to formulate methods that could combine statistics with active and regular contributions from the enterprise system. This would also involve cooperation between schools/training centres and local employment offices. As with many of the EU Member States there is a lack of adequate statistics and databases for VET, both for initial training that is separate from general secondary and for continuing training.

All sides require a greater understanding of their opportunities and responsibilities, but also a better awareness of how institutions and organisations work and how change and reform can be managed. This is relevant to policy processes, and the role that each actor plays in them.

⁵ Turkey, which has a different 20th century history and a population of 74 million, while sharing many of the preoccupations of the other three South Eastern European countries, stands somewhat apart in the relative maturity of its institutional arrangements for VET.

4. PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF SOCIAL PARTNER DIALOGUE AND STRUCTURES THAT PARTICULARLY CONCERN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: THE CHALLENGE

‘What is required is a shift from social dialogue to social partnership⁶.’

In order to generate interest among the social partner stakeholders, it is necessary to demonstrate the benefits of participation to all concerned.

Employers need to see the potential for increases in labour productivity. They want to be assured that the people they hire from training institutions are well prepared, and they want a better return on the training taxes they might be paying. With regard to continuing training and in-company provision, employers are reluctant to see staff whom they have trained being poached by other enterprises. It will ultimately be necessary to develop a culture of overall investment in transferable training.

Trade union members need to see that standards can improve job entry prospects, wages and mobility for their members. For

both employers and employees there is a case for local development strategies. The most recent research demonstrates the link between continuing training for enterprises and increased employability and competitiveness. Perceived from a tripartite perspective (government, employers and trade unions) it is possible to find articulations of the values outlined above in each of the four countries.

There is a recognition in the four countries of the peer learning exercise of the issues outlined above, and a clear identification in policy documentation and actual or prospective legislation of the important role of social dialogue. In each country the reality on the ground (in terms of strategic implementation) may be quite different from the rhetoric. The remaining sections of this document explore the convergence and divergence of theory and actual practice, with the actual practice being presented in the case studies for each country.

⁶ The quotations throughout the paper reflect statements of the peers.

5. CONTEXT: THE FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN TOURISM AND CONSTRUCTION

5

‘Context is everything, or nearly everything.’

The self-study documents show that each of the four countries respond differently to the same questions, as a result of a number of factors: range of population size (approximately 2 million; 4.5 million; 7.3 million and 74 million); geographical location and country borders; demographic trends; internal and external migration; employment and unemployment trends; recent conflict history; recent independence; and impacts of the international community.

All these variables are relevant in Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

There is a danger in applying a common approach to these countries regardless of

their location on the development spectrum. One can ask the same questions, but the answers are likely to be different. For example, donor interventions have taken place to a different extent and with a different timescale in each of the countries. All four have ambitions to join the EU and have access to EU funds, but the timescales and politics are different.

Furthermore, when discussing prospective decentralisation it is important to remember that three of the countries’ overall population sizes are at the level to which a larger country, such as Turkey, might decentralise. Historically, Turkey has mature social partner structures; whether these are fully effective is a matter for discussion. The other three countries from South Eastern Europe are in transition, with legislation and institutions still in a state of flux.

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‘The complexities of the labour market and of VET’s relationship with it are so great that few people (even working in the field) can understand them.’

VET responds to labour market demands. Nevertheless, even in a weak labour market the capacity of VET to respond to both actual and prospective demands needs to be developed in the medium term.

VET as a separate subsystem interacts with the labour market. This creates the need for quite complex structures, institutions and coordination. Examples are given for each country in the annexes of good practice in the way VET structures (with social partner involvement) respond to labour market needs. Each example has been supported and influenced by EU donor funding.

6. THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP AND THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND TRAINING CENTRES

‘School directors everywhere are very capable of interpreting central control to the advantage of the local situation; in the UK as a consequence they are paid more than senior civil servants.’

For VET, the local level is where the clients are to be found; the central level is where control instruments remain important.

In many countries the attempt to bring VET closer to labour markets, especially local ones, has been a major reason for education authorities to grant more autonomy to institutions, in terms of both letting them decide on (parts of) the curricula in relation to local conditions, and allowing them greater freedom in organising the learning process.

The question of coordination at local and regional levels is an important one.

Decentralisation of one form or another is necessary to effect the responsiveness of VET towards local markets. Who decides what and where is a question for review and reform. Equally important are the constitutional obligations at each level, for example the legislation for establishing institution governing bodies (and their relative autonomy to relate to local social partners and for social partner infrastructure).

Hence, decentralisation for VET implies financial responsibility at local level but requires national uniform technical guidelines in areas such as occupational standards, vocational qualifications and core curricula in order to retain a steering role for government. It also needs to address the local/regional involvement of the social partners. Decentralisation can also signify delegation of technical

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responsibilities to bodies at local level (in areas such as standards, qualifications and finance).

For vocational schools and training centres it is important to remember that legislation, financing and infrastructure exist only to support education and training at local level. They have no other function. During the peer group's visits to the four countries it was interesting to see that their interest was greater when they visited schools and centres – whether public or private, tourism or construction – where the real 'nitty-gritty' problems could be identified at ground level.

In all four countries, with some variations, the disappointments expressed have concerned:

- the lack of school autonomy and the persistence of centralised control;
- the lack of schools' ability to control their own budgets, particularly in respect of earned income derived from training for local enterprises;
- the direct products of initial training provision and its curricular relevance to demand;
- the lack of concern for local labour markets and local labour market information;
- local and national political (and therefore policy) turbulence.

Best practice in relation to social partners in all four countries has largely been perceived to be at institution (school) level, and to a lesser extent at regional level, a notable example being the Turkish Provincial Employment and Education Councils. Examples of good practice include:

- school–enterprise relations relating both to the relevance of curriculum content and to opportunities for trainee practice;
- the establishment of schools that are part-funded by social partners;
- the participation of social partners as members of school boards or advisory bodies (and the functions of the latter);
- the participation of social partners as members of examining bodies and

therefore their involvement with quality issues.

The issues illustrated below are: practice organised by a training institute funded by social partners in Turkey; the difficulties of establishing enterprise links in relatively weak formal economies; the perception of social partner involvement in school decision-making bodies in such economies; and involvement of social partners in examining bodies in Serbia.

Despite some recent decentralisation, school–employer links in the three Balkan countries seem to be based largely on personal relationships and initiatives, and in several cases are remnants of the old system.

The overall advantages and disadvantages of enterprise-based trainee practice are well illustrated with the tourism example in the Turkish self-study document.

Advantages

- Trainee education helps students to be humanistic, broadminded and well-educated graduates who can communicate with people all around the world.
- It gives students a chance to apply the information that they have acquired theoretically.
- It helps students to familiarise themselves with the tourism sector.
- Students develop discipline as a result of the training.
- It helps students to be social in a positive way.

Disadvantages

- The firms involved may see the students as a cheap labour force.
- Some franchise hotels are not willing to work with school graduates.
- The duration of trainee education can lead to boredom among the students.
- Some agencies have the students working as normal workers, not as trainees.
- Some enterprises make the students work more than eight hours.

7. OLD AND NEW CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP: SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

7

‘If social partnership does not lead to real change frustration among the social partners will grow and eventually undermine it altogether.’

‘Old’ social partnerships refer to partnerships between the government, employers and trade unions – tripartite social partnerships. They are ‘old’ in the sense that they represent a traditional type of relationship, whereas ‘new’ social partnerships can include, for example, local governments, NGOs, civil organisations and individual businesses.

In some areas, for example within the labour market, issues such as wage negotiations can be resolved through bipartite partnerships between the employers and trade unions. Other issues require the participation of the government in a tripartite partnership, also commonly described as a social partnership. As new organisations participate in socioeconomic development they are increasingly being considered social partners and therefore invited to participate in dialogue.

In all three cases social partnership functions as a problem-solving process that has evolved on the basis that all parties agree that partnership and dialogue are the tools that facilitate the process. The government often provides the arena within which the social partners, as stakeholders, engage in a flexible process of addressing immediate problems while simultaneously attending to long-term development. Tripartite and bipartite structures exist in all four countries. They produce very different outcomes depending on the state of development and transition in each country.

In Turkey the national tripartite structures are well established, and sector and local social partners are able to take strong initiatives; this is not to suggest that the situation is perfect. In Croatia VET legislation was adopted in spring 2009. In Serbia VET legislation (with implications for social partnership) has not yet been updated or, as in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, is very recent, as is its strategic implementation. The tradition

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of centrally planned economies is not very far in the past. There are also anomalies, including the following: the traditional strength of the trade unions in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; their relative invisibility in Serbia; and also in Serbia, the variable and declining role of the chamber(s) of commerce as a virtual social partner.

In all of this the rather traditional notion of structured tripartite or bipartite social partnership prevails, whether as rhetoric or in reality. In all the countries, however, there is implicit or explicit multipartite partnership involving partially decentralised local government (locality, municipality, region or individual school). Urban planning for the municipality of Ohrid in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is an example involving both construction criteria and the notion of 'elite tourism', together with an inspectorate that is also concerned with environmental issues. Construction enterprises require a licence to operate.

Interest or lobbying groups can be seen as a further extension of the notion of multipartite partnership. The National Chamber of Commerce in Serbia is an example. Although the chambers of commerce as such are not formally seen as social partners, they have had a significant role in the reform processes in Serbia. The Law on Chambers of Commerce (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 65/01) regulates the system of chambers of commerce. According to Article 1 of this law:

'The chambers of commerce are interest, independent and business-professional organisations of enterprises, entrepreneurs and other forms of organisations dealing with industry, which are linked by common

business interests in a particular territory of the Republic of Serbia. They are part of a network of entities of industry that have the aim of realising and ensuring common interests that are important for industry in Serbia.'

The role of the chambers at national and regional levels is a good illustration of the extension of the notion of social partnership beyond bipartite and tripartite arrangements. They are both part of recent history in the countries of South Eastern Europe with a formalised role (they are, rightly or wrongly, seen by some contemporary social partners as a historical part of government) and part of a more informal present and future. They can be seen as both partners and competitors, the latter especially by the more traditional trade unions and employers' associations. Very often taking the initiative, they make full use of the scope they are allowed, sometimes in the face of resistance from traditional policy influencers, often in government.

Overall, in the three Western Balkan countries there are examples of bipartite, tripartite and multipartite initiatives, but weak formalised infrastructures. In Turkey there are mature structures consistent with a large country (in terms of both population and geography). These structures are also consistent with the ability to represent social partner interests in influencing government and in taking funding initiatives of their own, a position towards which social partners in South Eastern Europe still largely aspire. Nevertheless, in all four countries – Turkey, Croatia, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – it is the government, represented by line ministries, that is organising the arena and determining the rules of the game.

8. LEGISLATION AND FINANCING: SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP BASED ON SHARING RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8

‘Law-making is not enough. There is a need to make the principle of social partnership work in practice through more support, dialogue and partnerships at local and school levels.’

Legislation relevant to social partnership is at different stages of development in the four countries, though there are significant overlaps in Croatia, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The legislative support for social partnership in Turkey is more mature.

A number of questions apply to all four countries.

- A. What political will exists (at the different levels of government and within the different social partner constituencies) for legislation to enable social dialogue to take place? If this already exists, how effective has its implementation been?

- B. How far is actual and intended legislation compatible with parallel legislation (for example, on labour, local government and lifelong learning)?
- C. Do the sections on finance, decentralisation and the role of VET institutions need to be strengthened?

The answers to these questions for the three Western Balkan countries are mixed. There has been weak political will, accompanied by political and governmental change; parallel legislation is often conflicting; and greater clarity and an increased level of autonomy are required in relation to both decentralisation and the role of schools. In the case of finance, the issue is often the lack of transparency rather than an overall lack of money. In some cases legislation has been delayed or overturned, or is inadequate. In others, legislation as a whole is subject to constant change.

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‘VET curricula and even organisational reform is relatively easy compared with finance, where so many complex interests at every level need to be assuaged.’

Financial issues can be divided into:

- macro-level funding (government as a whole and alternative funding for VET);
- micro-level funding (specific funding to sustain social partner activities and social partner institutions, and specific sector initiatives such as schools funded through bipartite initiatives).

Finance for VET is always limited and governments are constantly looking for ways in which they can:

1. mobilise untapped resources by:
 - increasing revenues from traditional sources; and/or
 - diversifying sources of financing for VET, i.e. raising revenues from non-traditional sources;
2. improve the efficient use of existing resources.

Whatever their other virtues, decentralising to local level and seeking funding from the private sector are two means of diverting financing responsibility away from central government.

Conversely, from the social partner point of view it might be desirable to establish some programmes in which the social partners manage public funds that are allocated to continuing training. This is because entrepreneurs believe they know much more about how in-company training can be made efficient, and can manage resources for continuing training and company-based training within initial training or apprenticeships better and more efficiently than governments can.

From the central government point of view, payroll levies for apprenticeships or continuing training are one means of raising funds from enterprises.

Implementation methods vary: light but obligatory tax levies (Italy); agreement formulas (Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom); heavy obligatory tax levies (France); and a combination of obligatory tax levies and agreement formulas (Scandinavian countries).

Co-financing, or ‘matching funds’, which is characterised by cost sharing between each actor involved in the VET system (public institutions, enterprises and individuals) is an approach that can:

- reduce the financial burden on governments;
- promote local initiatives;
- garner additional resources from the private sector;
- allow public resources to be used to encourage specific initiatives connected to the development of VET.

Public–private partnership experiences in VET financing still appear modest. While there is an interest in such partnerships in all EU Member States, experience remains limited. The United Kingdom stands out as having the longest and most substantial experience of public–private partnerships.

In Turkey and Croatia tax exemptions exist, and some initiatives for private or public–private partnerships have been implemented. Vocational schools in Turkey have much better prospects for generating their own income through production efforts compared with the other three countries, although in all four countries the provision of adult learning programmes – a potential source of income for schools – is very modest or absent.

9. COORDINATION, STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS: THE FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

9

‘The transition phase has had negative effects on the economy, social partners and schools [...] but there are positive moments. Now there is a need for a more systematic, structured approach. But it is difficult to change minds, and we lack competences.’

‘There has been experimentation, what is now required is consolidation.’

In order to fulfil the functions prescribed by actual or intended government VET reforms involving social dialogue, the following questions need to be asked.

- Are the main institutions in place (whether or not these are identified by the legislation)?
- Are their statutes clear?
- Do more institutions need to be created?
- How are relations between them to be coordinated?

- How long will it be before they can exercise their functions effectively?
- What is the financing base?

Statutes, working priorities and methods all need to be tested and developed, and the necessary capacity development must take place. Fresh and specific VET legislation (Section 8, above) might fill some of the gaps that are apparent in roles and responsibilities. Institutional support for labour market information and skills analysis is also required at each level.

A critical question is how far an overlapping range of institutional places are required for the labour market. These include cyclical approaches towards labour market needs and training analysis developed at local, regional, entity and national levels, systematically consolidated through the establishment of appropriate institutions. In order to ensure permanent inputs in relation to occupational and training needs

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as well as curriculum content, the participative involvement of the social partners may need to be consolidated by the renewal and further development of appropriate organisations for partnership among key parties, including the state, the municipalities, employers and employees.

Another critical decision is the extent to which common institutional places can be shared for all functions in education, and whether vocational education (the specific nature of which provides common ground for the interests of many ministries and social partners) needs its own institutional places, now or in the future, or whether it can share common institutional places for specific issues (for example, assessment).

The findings, particularly in the Western Balkan countries, are mixed. Employers' associations overlap with chambers (of commerce, of industry, of crafts, of the

economy). In fact they are in competition for influence. VET and adult agencies (or centres) have been created, delayed or abolished, then re-created and under-resourced. In Turkey a national qualification framework is being developed by the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA), whereas in Croatia this process is coordinated by the existing VET Agency through sector committees. The other two countries still have to decide whether to develop a national qualification framework, and if so, what its structure will be. Coordination among ministries is variable or non-existent. Trade unions consider VET a very low priority. In all of this, the role of ministries of education (even in Turkey) is not always transparent, particularly as they may wish to retain a controlling function in relation to the social partners. Clarity, coordination and trust are not seen as their principal characteristics.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVES

10

The peer learning exercise – from preparation to peer learning events within the countries⁷ – took place during the middle months of 2008, when financial crises and actual or possible recession were at the top of the international agenda. The two occupational sectors chosen to illustrate the principal themes (construction and tourism) are among those that are most affected by the economic downturn. The global financial crisis might also affect the EU strategies emanating from the Lisbon, Copenhagen, Maastricht and Helsinki agendas.

When considering conclusions and recommendations it is important to bear in mind that Turkey's population size (74 million, compared with 7.3 million in Serbia, 4.5 million in Croatia and 2 million in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and its historical context in the 20th and 21st centuries, together with its

strong institutional developments, often keep it not separate from, but to one side of, the issues pertinent to the three Western Balkan countries.

In this section two perspectives – top-down and bottom-up – are put forward. It is important to include both when reflecting the current state of affairs shown by the findings. The top-down perspective relates to social dialogue as policy and strategy, while the bottom-up perspective concerns social partnership in VET practice at local and school levels (as opposed to initiatives from the policy level). In this respect the interaction between top-down and bottom-up initiatives is important.

The top-down approach is linked to social dialogue and to VET policy and strategy. A top-down approach in this case will essentially involve breaking down a system – social dialogue and VET policy and

⁷ Country visits took place as follows: Croatia, 6–10 September 2008; Serbia, 10–13 September 2008; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 5–8 October 2008; Turkey, 8–11 October 2008.

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strategy – in order to gain insight into its component sub-systems (government level, ministries, legislation, financing). Basically, a greater understanding of the top-down approach gives a better sense of the magnitude of change that will be required in order to achieve the objectives of the reform.

Reviewing government policy and strategic implementation, involving policy papers, legislation, financing and infrastructure for delivery, may reveal political turbulence including and involving frequent changes of government and hence of policy direction. This has created a lack of ‘joined-up thinking’ and continuity.

‘Government may have other immediate priorities than the infrastructure for the economic and social development of the people.’

The bottom-up approach relates to VET practice rather than policy, and to developments at local level. In a bottom-up approach the different sub-systems are pieced together to create a larger system, and in this case the focus was on social partner involvement in education and training practice, as well as school–enterprise relations.

In all four countries there are many examples of good local cooperation among the social partners, and between the social partners and local schools and training centres. Very often, though not always, this cooperation takes place in spite of or in reaction to the government’s lack of priority in respect of VET rather than as a result of government initiatives. This varies from country to country, and in all four there are steps, albeit rather slow and uncertain ones, towards regional and local decentralisation. The peers themselves were far more impressed by what is happening at ground level than by what is happening in the policy stratosphere (see Sections 5–11 of this report).

The turbulence and uncertainty at government level (especially in the three

Western Balkan countries) was contrasted by the peers with the tangible initiatives and projects on the ground, where a higher degree of sustainability was evident. At the same time there was little evidence that these local initiatives were used to steer policies.

‘The social partners must take their economic and social case (even aggressively) to government, whose duty it is to respond.’

The summary conclusions and recommendations that follow are derived both from the specific sections in the text and from the detailed self-study documents⁸ prepared by each country team. Plenty of instances of good practice are mentioned, as are urgent needs for change. The conclusions and recommendations are separate but complementary, and are drawn from the contents of the succeeding sections.

10.1 CONCLUSIONS: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVES

Despite some encouraging efforts, there is still a lack of robust mechanisms at government level for inter-ministerial and inter-agency cooperation. This is particularly the case for relationships between ministries of education, labour and economy, whose separate initiatives concerning social partnership often remain uncoordinated.

Ministries of education (with their various adjuncts, such as culture, science and sport) are generally less transparent than they could be in relation to policy direction, finance and the sub-agencies they control. Despite some progress, they are also less inclined to cede control to social partner infrastructures. This is partly because they have long histories and large budgets, and partly because they have complex procedures and classifications which also cross ministerial boundaries.

⁸ The country peer team has full ownership of this national background document, and is responsible for producing it in the form of a ‘self-study’. The self-study document informs peers about issues in the country concerned, and in particular it is a base for facilitating discussions during the peer learning event.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVES

Ministries have found it difficult to emerge from historically centralised and bureaucratic regimes. One issue is that all states control the distribution of valuable assets and the imposition of onerous costs. The distribution of these benefits is under the control of agents who possess discretionary powers and who are reluctant to abandon them. Most social partner organisations show a similar lack of success in moving from traditional (wage-conflict-oriented) approaches to more open and broader ways of seeking consensus on a range of issues, including lifelong learning. Moreover, in many cases the low membership numbers call into question the representativeness of the organisations.

Different political actors (employers, trade unions, bureaucrats) come to the table with specific economic interests that are either helped or hindered by different institutional arrangements. This creates a 'win or lose' scenario involving bargains and changes. The peers see the 'game' very often as being tipped towards government, with a perception of indifference towards the issue of social partnership (or, as is often the case, with rhetoric rather than reality). This is often accompanied by politician ignorance and indifference towards VET, and hence a lack of political will to pursue change. Turkey may be an exception, with its policy of moving secondary provision towards a level of 60% VET as it moves through transition from a traditionally agricultural economy.

Legislation and regulation supporting social partnership in relation to VET is subject to frequent change, very often without consultation with the social partners, especially with regard to the expectation of their own financial contributions (for example, payroll levies and tax exemptions). Specific VET legislation is often drafted without taking into account complementary legislation on such issues as labour, local government and general education.

In general the financing of VET often lacks transparency, the capacity for sustainability, and realism, for example in the creation of VET centres to manage the

whole range of VET activities (including involvement of the social partners) without the financial means to do so.

Institutional mechanisms (the VQA in Turkey; VET Councils and Centres in Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; VET and Adult Education Agencies in Croatia) are in the process of construction and development, with the partial or total involvement of the social partners. This is a positive beginning and a sign of progress. The danger is that there will be token representation and a lack of financing and sustainability; delays and indifference on the part of government could also hinder progress. There may also be a lack of understanding on all sides of how organisations work and how change can be brought about.

There is a lack of information and analysis, reflecting a historical lack of esteem for VET compared with general secondary or higher education. Very few countries, whether EU Member States or accession countries, have statistical systems that can provide data on aggregated costs (and even fewer can give data on disaggregated costs) for VET as opposed to other types of education. Initial and continuing training are only occasionally monitored.

VET is an education and training sub-system responding to a labour market of some complexity. A critical question is how well the overlapping range of institutional places required for the labour market have been adequately established in each of the four countries, including cyclical approaches towards labour market needs and training analysis developed at local, regional, entity and national levels, systematically consolidated by the establishment of appropriate institutions.

There is little evidence that social partners have been involved in the education process itself, except in cases where new curricula have been developed with mainly donor support. However, the initiatives in Croatia and Turkey to develop national qualification frameworks provide a good platform for social partner involvement in the development of qualifications.

On the other side of the negotiating table the social partners themselves very often require a clearer articulation of their actual and potential role, and the will (and financial means) to fulfil it. This is more often the case for trade unions, for whom VET can be a very low priority for bipartite/tripartite or multipartite negotiation.

The nature of, and hence the structures required to support, social partnership is not always clear. There is a tendency to organise relationships around traditional perceptions of bipartite and tripartite structures, whereas social partnership, globally, is increasingly seen as a multipartite arrangement involving, for example, local government and possibly both the historical and contemporary roles of the chambers.

What is missing, or exists rather haphazardly at local level, is the capacity to define occupational sector priorities and skill needs, and, for schools, the capacity to be responsive to employers and the community at local and regional levels. While at national level there is some ability to collect, analyse and report labour market information, this capacity is much weaker at local level, where labour markets actually exist. There is a perception that social partners are often reluctant to be involved with local collaborative structures, although the international evidence is that if such structures are created, social partner involvement is high.

Local collaboration and indeed continuing training provision by schools are limited because of the lack of curriculum, financial and personnel autonomy, despite (largely cosmetic) policy moves in this direction.

10.2 GOOD PRACTICE: IDEAS AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

The somewhat severe conclusions above are mitigated by cases of good practice on the part of social partners at local level in all four countries. Examples include:

- local and school initiatives in construction and tourism (described throughout this report);

- mature social partner structures in Turkey, in particular the development of the VQA with its tripartite representation, which was established by law in 2006 and which reinforced education policy dialogue as a whole;
- the existence in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of VET legislation, a VET Council and VET Centre, and good labour market information from the Employment Service Agency (ESA);
- the tourism strategy and master plans from the Ministry of Economy in Serbia; these demonstrate positive intentions, but have yet to be financed;
- the endorsement of the strategy for VET development in Croatia (2008–2013);
- the active involvement of social partners in both the sector councils (see Section 11) and the Croatian national qualification framework;
- the involvement of social partners in examination committees in Serbia and in three-year craft occupation training in Croatia.

10.3 RECOMMENDATIONS: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVES

Since it is unrealistic to believe that political turbulence, whether global or national, is likely to disappear, and with it policy uncertainty, concentration on the local and school levels could be given a higher priority by donors, social partners and governments. After all, national and regional infrastructures exist only to support VET delivery at school and training centre level. This is certainly where the peers' interests lie.

Social dialogue at policy level

Inter-ministerial coordination is a must, whether it takes place through a council of ministers or through a specialised agency beyond the line ministries. It is for each country to decide on the level of interaction, from light cooperation to a strong coordination body (with formal social partner involvement). A national qualifications body (such as the Turkish VQA) might fulfil this need.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP PERSPECTIVES

Ministries of education in particular require greater transparency. Social partner involvement in the budget planning process could help to identify proposed projects and allocations that are the highest priorities for the community. This would contribute to a more efficient use of limited resources. Citizens – even social partners – often have a limited understanding of how government functions can breed distrust. At the same time, government officials often feel buffeted by competing demands that they cannot meet with existing resources. Engaging in dialogue on budget issues could bridge this gap and facilitate healthy debate about policies and priorities.

Governments probably need to continue to organise the arena, and provide support, for social dialogue. In order to achieve this it is important to fully understand the social partners' goals, competences and capacities in relation to VET; this would be a step towards building consensus. Governments need to be fully aware of where developments should be heading, especially with regard to how much decision-making power can be transferred to a social partnership structure. This is even more important if VET management and/or delivery is carried out by a number of different ministries or committees.

This raises the issue of the need for phasing and planning for strategic implementation, and hence for sustainability. Practical implementation and operational requirements need to involve the social partners and take into account:

- the order of priority for implementation;
- the sequence of timescales and reform strategies, and the steps that need to be consistent with longer-term objectives;
- the need for appropriate mechanisms and timing;
- the framework by which operational issues are to be addressed, in terms of, for example, topics, priorities and timescales.

In considering new or revised legislation involving either the participation of social partners or the structuring of social partnerships, considerable care is required

in order to ensure consistency across sectors and ministries, especially ministries of the economy, labour and local government. In some cases there is a simple need to legislate and regulate for social partner involvement.

In order to be effective, partnerships need to consider different types of cost, such as those required to establish the partnership and then to manage it. It would be advisable to consider a financing structure with this in mind.

In line with this recommendation, it is necessary to increase private investment, in collaboration with the social partners. Co-financing, or 'matching funds', which is characterised by cost sharing between the actors involved in the VET system (including public institutions, enterprises and individuals) is an approach that could:

- reduce the financial burden on governments;
- promote local initiatives;
- garner additional resources from the private sector;
- allow public resources to be used to encourage specific initiatives connected to the development of VET.

While political indifference to VET and its infrastructure is difficult to overcome, much greater administrative and managerial competences are required, together with a better understanding of how organisations work and relate to one another. This may be a pious wish, but the emphasis from donors (and governments) requires an even greater reinforcement of capacity building in public administration. This might avoid an unhealthy tendency to create institutions 'to be responsible for the problem, not to solve it'.

Arrangements for monitoring progress and collecting evidence should include VET policies (including financing) using instruments commonly used for the evaluation of other public policies (in short, a public administration approach). The basic starting point for this analysis must be a common measurement framework. The elaboration of such a framework should include not only the quantitative

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aspects of the financing of VET systems (i.e. volume indicators), but also qualitative aspects and mechanisms, and the connections between the two.

At both state and VET institution levels it is necessary to secure a clear relationship between social partnership policy making and its implementation and monitoring. Monitoring is becoming increasingly important as an element of policy development and learning. Partnership bodies must take these developments into consideration when reviewing their operational framework in order to remain relevant for policy making at national and VET institution levels.

In some areas, for example within the labour market, issues such as wage negotiations can be resolved through bipartite partnership, specifically between the employers and trade unions. Other issues will require the participation of the government in a tripartite partnership. As new organisations (such as local government and municipalities) participate in socioeconomic development, such organisations may increasingly need to be considered as social partners, and therefore invited to participate in the social partnership dialogue.

Social partner involvement in education and training practice

In order to ensure permanent input to occupational and training needs as well as curriculum content, the participative involvement of the social partners needs to be consolidated by the renewal and further development of appropriate partnership arrangements among key parties, i.e. the state, the municipalities, employers and employees. Mechanisms for vocational guidance and counselling need to be introduced at local level; both databases and reader-friendly information sources should be established.

The development of national qualification frameworks is a particular area in which social partner involvement is critical (see the examples of the Turkish VQA and the Croatian Qualification Framework (CROQF) given in annex).

Social partnership bodies place a heavy burden on participating organisations, in terms of both the workload involved and the insight required by each organisation into labour market and VET issues. Moreover, given their human and financial resource limitations, employers and trade unions must also determine their overall priorities and decide where VET sits within these priorities.

All four countries strongly demonstrate the need for capacity building for social partners, whether this is in defining and articulating their role, or funding and negotiating their positions.

School–enterprise relations

All four countries identify support for social partner involvement at local level as a priority, though few conditions and mechanisms exist to facilitate this. In the section of this report in which issues at local level are discussed, reference is made to the key questions concerning relative school autonomy in the four countries:

- financial – relating to the issue of retention of earned income and capacity for virement;
- curricular – relating to their capacity to respond to local needs;
- personnel – relating to their capacity to appoint appropriate staff.

There is much discussion of these issues at policy level, but the implementation that is necessary to support the developments at local level is long overdue.

Examples of good practice in local labour market relations at school level are illustrated throughout the text. However, what is really required is for these practices to be ‘institutionalised’ through the following actions:

- broadening the cooperation from a focus on work placement and practical training arrangements to other areas for cooperation, and building up a participatory process involving key stakeholders on the labour demand side that will ensure permanent inputs, in

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- terms of occupational and training needs, to local VET policymakers;
- developing, locally, a permanent unit for professional and training needs analysis and forecasting, working out methods that combine statistics with active and regular contributions from the enterprise system;
- consolidating working groups of cross-regional stakeholders for the relevant occupational sectors.

In particular, schools need to build on existing good practice, such as strong cooperation with employers in the identification and quality monitoring of training places. As with other areas of activity (including curriculum development, certification and teacher training), one task will be to find institutional places for labour market analysis.

Schools themselves, in collaboration with local employment offices, could establish a local experimental network (LENET) to test and develop:

- their own capacity to define occupational sector priorities and skill needs;
- their own capacity to be responsive to employers and the community at local and regional levels.

The intention would be for the local network (as with its regional counterpart) to include local social partners, educators, public sector agencies and parents. It would be organised around schools' own direct capacity to define and respond to local needs.

A local experimental network could institutionalise labour market information and skill needs analysis by formalising and making routine links between a school, a labour office and enterprises and providing administrative capacity to service its functioning and its partners. All the international evidence is that social partners are motivated to be involved when there is an established structure to support that involvement.

11. POLICY LEARNING TO FACILITATE EDUCATIONAL CHANGE WITH SOCIAL PARTNERS: THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

11

‘Organisational theory and change management are little understood by the actors in the field.’

The ETF 2008 peer learning project brought together policymakers and social partners as important groups of stakeholders in the process of educational change. Through this approach it became clear that the focus is on the transition from policy development to policy implementation, a process that involves many stakeholders, and in particular the social partners.

The main idea of the approach is that the policymakers and social partners learn from the analysis of the issue in their own country and from being part of a peer team, as well as from the visits to policy arenas in the field of social partner involvement in education and training in different countries. This approach may be considered as transitional, moving away

from an expert-driven knowledge-transfer model towards participatory forms of policy learning in which policymakers and other stakeholders have consolidated their understanding of the needs of the reforms of education systems.

Reform and change has to be carried out largely by existing staff, and despite widespread agreement on global policy objectives and improved policies, reform actors might still be uncomfortable at the prospect of changing traditional ways. Accomplishing change is about reversing deeply embedded policies and strongly held beliefs. While system change in transition countries was traditionally designed by the centre and decreed from the top, the political culture is now slowly changing. This allows local agents to claim a stake in the design of reform concepts.

With growing importance being attached to education, it is increasingly attracting the

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interest of many different lobbies and constituencies. The days when education policies were developed by the ministry alone and implemented by schools, teachers and learners are coming to an end. Policy implementation is not a linear, rational process, but usually involves complex mediation among competing interests. This is one of the main reasons why modern reform approaches are broader in scope: they are seeking ways of involving the various stakeholders. Collaboration becomes a categorical imperative. The centre needs to focus on norms and the periphery on delivery. If the two are to function together, a clear sense of public purpose is needed, as well as new partnerships and skills.

Agencies need to be given the necessary powers to organise activities and become negotiating arenas. A shift is taking place in the policy management of public services: the stress is no longer on inputs but on outputs. Such a process of cultural transformation and the translation of policy into practice is almost always an extremely lengthy process. McLeish argues in the introduction to *Processes of Transition in Education Systems* (McLeish and Phillips, 1998) that the completion of the transition process at the structural–legislative level in no way implies that educational transition at the micro level has been achieved. To change a label is easy; to effect a comprehensive change in practice is very difficult.

System change must build on existing institutional structures that have developed historically. It is likely to be achieved only through small, incremental change in narrow and targeted areas and only where there is equilibrium between radical change and traditional forces. Change requires a clear sense of public purpose, new partnerships and new skills, as well as careful policy coordination, compensatory mechanisms and collaboration in adequate forums for consultation and decision making. These are the challenges.

An important conclusion from the ETF 2008 peer learning experience is that the early involvement of social partners in the development of policy strategies will lead to stronger co-ownership and will therefore facilitate co-financing and implementation. Social partners are part of the policy process – they shape, they lead, they retreat, they chop and they can have a strong influence on policies, sometimes in unexpected directions. Therefore, at national level, governments need to facilitate this process by:

- fully understanding social partners' goals, competences and capacities in relation to VET as the first step towards building consensus;
- being fully aware of where developments should be heading, especially with regard to how much decision-making power can be transferred to a social partnership structure; this is of particular importance if VET management and/or delivery is carried out by a number of bodies, such as ministries or committees;
- involving social partners in the process where the government itself is a major player, a feature that should not be underestimated;
- acknowledging that employers (and possibly even trade unions), particularly in transition countries, are reluctant to push harder for influence simply because they are afraid that it might backfire; employers are exploring the emerging opportunities and their boundaries, often taking a cautious approach and making sure they do not step unnecessarily on the authorities' toes.

The difficulty in all of this is the administrative and management capacity to implement policy and structures even when these have been legislated for. This is the most difficult issue in the entire policy process.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: CROATIA

In Croatia the Employers' Association, the trade unions for construction and tourism and the chambers of commerce and economy cooperate on VET issues. They believe that their involvement in VET policy issues is very important. The government has created initial training and adult learning implementing agencies in consultation with, and with participation from, the social partners. The difficulty for the social partners is that they perceive themselves to be marginalised when it comes to the more important government decisions. In particular, they consider as problematic the three-year programmes for construction and tourism VET profiles, which are unable to attract sufficient numbers of young people. This has a significant impact on the quality of the labour force in these sectors. Among the alleviating factors are the Employers' Association initiative to provide scholarships to attract students into construction, and similar initiatives from the Ministry of Tourism for tourism and catering students.

School-based VET in Croatia is currently regulated by the Secondary Education Act. A three-year VET secondary education programme for craft occupations/apprenticeships is regulated by the Trades and Crafts Act, and a number of by-laws regulate the responsibilities of the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship and the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts (CCTC).

The improvement of legislation is an on-going process. A new Primary and Secondary Education Act was adopted in early 2009. This includes a number of general provisions relating to the VET system. A proposal for the contents of a separate VET Act was delivered in 2006 within the framework of the CARDS 2002 VET project. It was adopted through the relevant parliamentary procedure in 2009. This VET Act is seen as crucial for steering the reform process and providing a legal basis for appropriate strategic measures. With regard to the role of the social partners, it is widely expected that the Act will provide

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a legal basis for a more comprehensive and sustainable role, and subsequently for the development of new initiatives and approaches at both tripartite and bipartite levels.

A Development Strategy for the VET System (2008–2013) was adopted in 2008 with an action plan updated annually and presented to the Economic and Social Council. A Strategy for Adult Education and the relevant action plan was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in 2004. Parliament subsequently passed the Adult Education Act in 2007, creating the conditions for the integration of adult education into Croatia's education system for the first time. The act, *inter alia*, introduces some new concepts, such as education leave, adult education funding, and the partnership principle, which relates to the overall promotion of social dialogue at national and sector levels. In the summer of 2008 new regulations were established governing tax exemptions for enterprises undertaking training.

It is also important to note that a number of very visible structures have recently been established. Apart from the Economic and Social Council, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has created three agencies (the Agency for VET; the Agency for Adult Education and the Agency for Education and Teacher Training). Strategies exist for VET and adult provision. Legislation has been created for the latter, and is forthcoming for the former. The Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship has strong links with the chambers of economy and craft. Other line ministries have direct responsibilities for continuing training.

The labour legislation provides the legal bases for the establishment of the Economic and Social Council as a tripartite body of representatives of the government, trade unions and employers. The council has the major tasks of consulting on economic and social issues, where VET also plays an important role. The Economic and Social Council functions as an advisory body to the Croatian government.

In Croatia a long-established historical tradition is now in transition, and this necessitates the rebuilding of the adult education system while it gains independence, together with related changes in the political, economic and social systems, and factors such as the process of privatisation, the closing down of large companies, market insecurity, risks in the field of business, high unemployment, and planning difficulties, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. This situation applies equally to initial training, where financing is an integral part of the prospective VET Act. Anticipation of the act has not affected initiatives such as a teaching training contribution given by employers without charge. In this context, questions raised by social partners suggest a number of preoccupations.

- A major question will be how to finance the sector councils.
- Financing for adult provision is not institutionalised.
- Different ministries have different plans, priorities and criteria. Hence, it is almost impossible to ascertain the total amount of expenditure on adult training provision. Each line ministry has its own budget, and there is no integration.
- The Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship has contact with and provides funding for employers through projects, but small companies do not always have the administrative resources necessary to be involved (they need more support).
- There is inertia on the part of employers because, procedurally, funds from ministries and the employment agency are difficult to access.
- Employers need to be motivated to train employees. There is not enough financial incentive: the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship has a state subsidies law, but the Adult Education Act introduced by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports does not include a finance section.
- There are tax exemptions for in-company training, but employers see the procedures that must be followed as being more costly than the benefits.
- There was a suggestion of financing by companies in the first draft of the Adult Education Act, though no mechanisms were mentioned.

The current turbulence is unlikely to last forever. Although the situation is vulnerable now, gradual improvements might be possible over time.

All social partners have established functions or departments that are actively involved in the planning and implementation of various initiatives relating to education and training and employment issues. In the main they are members of steering committees of various EU projects on employment and education. The Croatian Chamber of Economy is particularly active in planning and implementing initiatives relating to the integration of Croatia into the EU. The most recent of these is the Regional Centre for Entrepreneurship Development.

The Employment Service focuses mainly on preventing long-term unemployment, and also on the delivery of career guidance to basic schools. They are involved in regular awareness-raising activities on the role of social partners in education and training. However, the perception of the social partners is that greater coordination is required among the ministries, agencies, chambers and delivery institutions.

The social partners' perceptions are that the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has no major focal point for the management of adult education; and that while the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship has contact with and funding for employers through projects, small companies do not have the administrative resources necessary to be involved (they need more support). There is inertia on the part of employers because, procedurally, funds (or exemptions) seem difficult to access. One example is that of tax reductions or exemptions for in-company training. Interviews with tax advisers suggest that the majority of employers find the procedures too cumbersome to make it worthwhile for them to pursue the projected benefits.

Based on the latest developments in the VET sector, social partnership in education and training is moving up the agenda. While it is already part of various strategic documents, it is still not seen as being organised effectively. The VET Agency has operated for three years and is preoccupied with reform while involving the social partners. For social partners and their role in education and training, this is mainly through the current development of 13 Sector Councils which were established in 2006 by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the VET Agency, with support from the CARDS VET programme. These Sector Councils are presented as the major bodies that bring together different social partners on VET issues. The supporting VET legislation was adopted in early 2009.

VET Sector Councils are an important initiative. The Labour Market Working Group under the CARDS VET 2002 project delivered a proposal for new VET areas/sectors, reducing 31 education sectors to 14 (13 VET sectors⁹ and the Art Sector). Since the VET Sector Councils have only recently been given a legal supporting framework (the necessary VET legislation was expected in early 2009), they have so far acted as voluntary bodies with a limited mandate. Their main task is to establish a set of national qualifications following a revision of occupational standards in order to replace a fairly outdated occupational system with a modern, demand-led set of occupational standards and qualifications.

In 2006 Croatia started the process of developing a qualification framework. In 2007 the government accepted the concept of a Croatian Qualification Framework (CROQF). A National Committee headed by the deputy prime minister with an operational team led by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports is taking the work forward. The committee

⁹ The redefined VET sectors are: (1) agriculture, food processing and animal health; (2) forestry and wood processing; (3) geology, mining, petroleum and chemical technology; (4) textiles and leather; (5) graphic technology and audio-visual media; (6) mechanical engineering, shipbuilding and metallurgy; (7) electrical engineering and computer science; (8) construction and geodesy; (9) economics, trade and business administration, (10) tourism and catering; (11) traffic and logistics; (12) health and social care; and (13) personal, safety and other services.

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has representation from both the VET and Adult Education Agencies. The CARDS Adult Education Project has a complementary component on quality and accreditation.

In the areas of both curriculum development and financing the autonomy of schools is very limited and, consequently, there is limited opportunity and motivation to establish cooperation with social partners at the regional or local level on vocational school curriculum development or other relevant issues. The process of decentralisation that was launched in 2001 represented in most cases a simple deconcentration of financing to lower administrative and governance levels. Links to local enterprises and organisations are weak (except to a certain extent in three-year craft programmes) and are not an integral part of the curriculum.

Students on the three-year programme must find their own training places as a prerequisite for entry. Such opportunities depend on the economic situation of the particular region; the economic prospects of local large companies or small entrepreneurs; local initiatives; and personal networks and initiatives of vocational school headteachers and teachers, and company managers. In a situation in which there are economic difficulties and obvious regional disparities, where unemployment is high and where companies give little emphasis to training, traditional links with schools have in the majority of cases deteriorated or even ceased to exist.

There are, however, many good examples. The VET Construction Secondary School Bedekovcina has well-established relations with Tondach Hrvatska, a large construction company. The three-year VET profiles are organised to include a significant amount of practical training in the school's workshops. The tourism school in Opatja has developed relationships both with local schools and with local hotels for which staff it provides language courses.

The available labour force is made up of individuals who have been left without jobs from other sectors and companies. The challenge is to retrain them. In order to improve the situation, the Employers' Association for Construction workers has financed the development of an additional curriculum based on 120 hours of training. Textbooks and teaching materials have been developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

ANNEX 2: THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Reinforcement of social partnership is seen by all sides in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as a key element for strengthening qualifications and competitiveness, and for increasing employment. The changing nature of the modern working environment is perceived as requiring innovative approaches in education and training to produce flexibility and adaptable skills for the global market. The main roles of the social partners in education, training and employment, at least notionally, are the development of qualification standards and curricula, the development of modular programmes, the promotion and planning of lifelong learning activities, contracting with companies for practical teaching for pupils, and the provision of training for various target groups (including those who are unemployed or socially unadaptable).

In the period 1996–2002 the country's Social and Economic Council did not have its own clearly defined goals or working agenda. At the same time the social partners were extremely weak. They had to function in a delicate economic and social environment characterised by high unemployment and a growing grey economy. The basis of social dialogue is now established by the Labour Law of 2005. This defines the legal framework for the development and functioning of employers' and workers' organisations, and

regulates labour relations. The same law provides the legal basis for the functioning of the Social and Economic Council. The council depends on a tripartite agreement between the government, the Economic Chamber of the Republic of Macedonia and the Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia. This raises again the question of the traditional role of the Chamber (and chambers).

At national level, social dialogue for the construction sector is on a tripartite basis through the Social and Economic Council, which consists of: the Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia (SSM/FTUM), the Employers' Organisation and the government. In the tripartite dialogue the Trade Union of Civil Engineering, Construction and Industrial Materials (SGIP) participates through SSM representatives, especially in relation to the ratification of ILO Convention 94 on labour clauses in contracts for public procurement. At branch level the social dialogue for construction is bipartite between SGIP and employers' representatives through the Employers' Organisation. At branch level in the tourism sector, more bipartite social agreements have been accomplished than tripartite ones. However, the tripartite system includes trade unions, the Employers' Union (via the Macedonian Chamber of Commerce and Hotel Association of Macedonia (HOTAM) for the hotel industry) and the government. In neither sector does lifelong learning figure high on the agenda.

The Labour Law of 2005 governs social partnership in general. VET legislation, which has been long in its preparation, is centred on initial training, with cross references to labour, local government and general education legislation together with lifelong learning. It spells out the roles of the principal participants and institutions, but it is the type of legislation that is 'enabling'. For example, it covers mission, curriculum reform and qualification levels. Most importantly it legitimates and details the roles of the National VET Council and National VET Centre, which respectively involve and deal with the social partners. The VET legislation went through a lengthy drafting period (with inter-ministerial representation) between 2003 and 2005. Its passage into law was delayed by political change, which resulted in it having low political priority, with the result that the establishment of the National VET Council and Centre was delayed: the National Council met for the first time only in 2008.

There are three sources of funding for continuing training:

- institutions and enterprises providing informal, in-house training;
- the unemployment fund, administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
- fees paid by individuals.

The data available on the extent of training provided by institutions and enterprises derives from the very professional pilot skill needs analysis undertaken by the Employment Service (2006–2007) in eight occupational sectors. The evidence suggests that training provision undertaken by enterprises is quite extensive. Enterprises needing a specifically skilled workforce are generally dissatisfied with the quality and relevance of training provided by the secondary vocational schools and therefore often provide the basic training required by new employees before they become operational. The duration of the training varies, but could last between three and twelve months. On-the-job training is not certified. The cost of the training is borne by the enterprise. Exceptionally, enterprises may pay for training programmes, often those offered by training providers outside the country.

Institutions such as hospitals require a workforce with specialist skills that are not currently taught in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As a consequence, specialist skills have to be developed on the job and are not given any formal certification. Institutions receive no compensation for the costs of providing training.

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The unemployment fund covers the costs of active and passive employment measures and the administrative costs of the national and local employment offices. The provision of training is only one of a number of active measures, and it is therefore evident that the amount expended on training is relatively small. The detailed investigation of skill needs in the country involved the use of detailed questionnaires and expert consultants.

Training is provided on the job by enterprises on condition that the trainee remains in employment with the company for at least one year following the training. Local employment offices arrange the training placements and make a monthly payment to the enterprise and to the trainee.

Vocational schools play little or no part in the retraining of unemployed individuals. Workers' universities provide requalification and qualification courses on a fee-paying basis. However, pilot regional centres (as in Serbia) have been identified as a means of meeting adult training needs.

Notionally, the ministries of labour and economy in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia both profess to be increasing inter-ministerial cooperation with VET project activities and developing greater focus for their own ministry's involvement. The Ministry of Economy had formal involvement in drafting VET legislation and will have formal involvement in the VET Council. The National Action Project of the Ministry of Labour has had full inter-ministerial involvement in its steering arrangements.

Nevertheless, the criticisms that emerge from key actors in the various constituencies of the VET system can be expressed as follows.

- Changes of government have led and do lead to discontinuities of policy and personnel.
- Nothing happens without the necessary political will.
- The different elements have not yet been fully brought together in a coherent framework.
- There has been experimentation; consolidation is now required.
- Understanding and agreement, both top-down and bottom-up, have not been fully achieved.
- The institutional framework for policy implementation is still incomplete. This covers areas such as occupational standards, labour market information, curriculum philosophy, certification and evaluation.
- While the tools may have been developed, the structure has not.

Overall the question posed is how far the national and local experimental processes that have so far been developed can be aggregated towards a coherent policy. The issues are well articulated but there are gaps in the political/policy/implementation spectrum. The view of one key actor was that the system is not lacking in harmony but that it is 'up to us to modify our conditions for strategic implementation'.

Social dialogue improved slightly in 2003 with the signing of the Agreement for Social Partnership between the government and the Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia, and with the changes in the structure of the new Social and Economic Council. However, dialogue through the Social and Economic Council does not function well because of a perceived lack of respect for the social partners on the part of the government. Social dialogue at regional and local levels has not been active because of a lack of development in the municipalities and the slow process of decentralisation. The National VET Council convened in July 2008 for the first time. It remains to be seen which topics will be put on the agenda, whether the economic social partners will participate fully and whether their voices will be listened to.

Following a CARDS project initiative, the Employment Service Agency (ESA) carries out a survey on skills needs among employers on an annual basis. The survey covers medium to large companies from eight sectors¹⁰. It analyses vacancies, the type of qualifications and skills required, and the demographic profile of employees. The 2007 survey findings resulted in training (with the help of the VET Centre) for so-called deficient profiles (profiles that are in demand in the labour market but that have so far not been catered for) such as welders.

The VET Centre might consider joining the survey working group and could have its own set of questions inserted into next year's survey. The main goal of the skills needs analysis for the ESA is to increase the knowledge of expected changes in the labour market in order to be able to:

- anticipate workforce recruitment for the next 2–6 months;
- identify the qualification needs for planned new jobs;
- identify employee shortages in particular occupations.

The latest National Report is a summary of the research that was conducted from June to November 2006 (in three phases) by 30 local ESA centres. This report provides short-term indicators of employers' expectations relating to new jobs that are likely to develop in the following twelve months at national level. With effect from 2007 the skill needs analysis has become part of the normal activities of the employment centres and the Central Office of ESA.

The VET Centre has a considerable number of current priorities, including an evaluation of the revised four-year VET programmes, a complete overhaul of three-year VET programmes and the development of two-year programmes. Other priorities include further work on the state matura exams and the final (VET) exams, quality in VET, in-service teacher training in VET, cooperation with social partners in the development of qualifications/occupational standards, as well as international cooperation. Cooperation with the social partners has been one of the main priorities of the VET Centre. However, the centre is not given sufficient resources to cover all these tasks. For example, it does not have sufficient advisers to cover all sectors (the construction, wood processing and graphics/design sectors are not covered). VET Centre staff claim that, despite many efforts, social partner organisations have not yet been responsive to the centre's call for cooperation (a letter to the Economic Chamber remained unanswered).

Examples of good practice exist at local level, where schools cooperate with employers on the adjustment of curricula and on in-company practical periods for students. Such periods take the form of group site visits and a compulsory 14-day summer practice. However, this is largely insufficient for equipping students with the necessary practical skills. Moreover, many of these school–company linkages vanished during the transition period. Ill-equipped schools are not in a position to compensate for the lack of practical training facilities. Pupils do participate in regular practical teaching and practice in various catering-tourism companies, hotels, restaurants and tourist offices in Skopje and around the country, but there is a lack of systematic monitoring of both the companies and the schools.

On the whole, school–enterprise relations have survived on the basis of informal contacts. The main complaint from employers is about the lack of practical training (10–24 days in summer). 'Appearing' at the workplace seems more important than the actual work itself. In spite of what is laid down in the VET legislation, it seems that regulations relating to the practical period are not followed and there is no clear quality assurance mechanism. Insurance is the responsibility of the parents. One hotel company mentioned that it is voluntarily paying the school €25 for each satisfactory placement.

¹⁰ The eight sectors that are included in the skills needs analysis are agriculture, manufacturing, construction, trade, restaurants/hotels, transport, financial mediation and real estate, and services.

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Cooperation between schools and social partners for the construction and geodetic branch is realised through company-based practical training and 'open hours' in the schools with project work. Some of the pupils from the Lazar Tanev secondary tourism-catering school in Skopje undertake practical work in the Roma-Paris tourist agency in Skopje. The Zdravko Cvetkovski construction school in Skopje cooperates with the Gipsar-Knauf company. In 2004 the Knauf company donated places for practical work to the school. Since then the company has employed pupils who have graduated in specific profiles.

The peer group interviewed the owner of a small construction company with a core workforce of 20 permanent employees and the capacity to substantially expand this on a temporary basis depending on demand. Broadly the work involved building individual or small clusters of houses in the local area. The employer was a member of the advisory committee of the local (polyvalent) school and provided both practical placements and subsequent employment to students. His feeling was that he had little influence on the curriculum, but was able to help with more organisational issues, and sometimes with materials.

ANNEX 3: SERBIA

In January 2001 the Ministry of Education and Sports launched a reform process for the education system, including VET. The first wave of reforms was reflected in the Strategy and Action Plan prepared by the ministry and in the 'Framework of Vocational Education Strategies in Serbia' document produced by an expert group for VET. The reform agenda in education and the change process defined in the Strategy and Action Plan relied on four main axes:

- decentralisation of education management through a redefinition of the role of the central administration, and regional and local education authorities;
- democratisation through participatory involvement of the stakeholders;
- improvement of the quality of education at all levels;
- coordination between the education and economic sectors, especially in respect of VET, higher education and adult education.

Legislative changes were passed in September 2001 introducing decentralisation procedures in VET organisational structures, as well as new concepts for the management of the schools, an increase in the role of school boards and the integration of members of the local community into the school board (parents' associations, teachers' associations).

The legislation provided for the establishment of new institutions, namely a Republic Council for VET and a National VET Centre to provide support to curriculum design and implementation, teacher training and overall monitoring, all with social partner participation.

In July 2003 the Law on the Foundations of the Education System was adopted and published by the government. The law introduced a broadening of VET governance through the nomination of tripartite bodies (e.g. a National VET Council). This meant that all major development aspects of VET (skill needs identification, standards, curricula, teacher training, manager training, supervision of reform implementation, concepts for adults, continuing training, accreditation, a national qualification system, evaluation, assessment and research) as well as major monitoring duties were placed with the VET Centre, the executive body of the proposed VET Council.

Changes in government and priorities reduced the VET Council to a committee of the Education Council and the VET Centre to a department in the Education Development Centre with a consequent loss of status, finance and staffing, but no reduction in responsibilities. In other words, these bodies were effectively put on hold. As outlined in

Section 5 above, this resulted in a reduced and merely advisory role for social partners. However, in 2008/09 new changes of government offered fresh hope for reviving VET as a priority.

VET is currently almost 100% financed through public funds. Provision is split between central financing (through the Ministry of Finance, covering salaries to teachers and other staff) and decentralised financing from municipalities (for equipment, materials and human resources development). There is no direct financing set aside for adult education, though five VET Pilot Centres providing continuing training have been set up.

Through the CARDS programme, collaboration between the working groups and a local think-tank (G17) has developed and drafted an alternative model for the financing of VET in Serbia. The model has been well received, and is now included in a chapter of the policy white paper accepted by government in 2007. This prospective model has many advantages, especially for initial training. It initiates the move towards output rather than input financing and thereby builds in an incentive that supports the effectiveness of the system. It also advocates efficiency gains through a more flexible approach to allocations instead of the current detailed focus that is based on classes. It promotes opportunities for co-financing through additional income (sales of training services) and sponsorship (by enterprises and parents).

Another specific issue relating to current financing is that the system does not differentiate between different kinds of education, including VET. So the more expensive elements of the VET system have identical allocations to general education, and schools that deliver courses in economics have the same allocation as those delivering welding. This results in school-based work practice being neglected and the quality of VET reduced.

There are specific initiatives. The department of the State Secretary for Tourism, part of the Ministry of Economy, has evolved a national strategy for tourism that includes master plans for specific districts. The location of schools (the school network) and the updating of their curricula are seen as important issues for achieving a modern approach to travel and tourism. The existence of the five regional adult pilot schools is seen as a good precedent to follow. EU accession funds are seen as potentially important, since money is short. The philosophy is one of 'small nudges; the identification of sources for the acquisition of funds; professional help in acquiring them'.

In Serbia there is still a need to set up systemic regulation for cooperation and links between vocational education representatives and all social partners and stakeholders, and to establish systemic mechanisms for the further development of VET at national level, in particular the establishment of the National Council for VET and Adult Education and the Agency for VET and Adult Education.

All sectors of the education system required attention, and until recently the main focus has been on elementary, general and higher education. It is understandable that people who themselves have gained most of their values and experience from the world of general education will focus on general learning and academic ambitions.

The Ministry of Economy and Regional Development focuses on small and medium-sized businesses. However, in accordance with Serbian tradition, initiatives have until now mainly taken the form of institution building within the ministry, with the creation of the Agency for SME Development and the Agency for Foreign Investments. Very few initiatives have been taken by the Ministry of Economy.

The socioeconomic partners are aware of VET and continuing training needs. Nevertheless, the Chamber of Commerce has closed its Department for Vocational Education. For the moment the Chamber will focus on its own continuing training services

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for companies and will not allocate resources to the modernisation of the formal VET system.

The Association of Employers, with its limited resources, retains an interest in VET reform, and jointly with the two recognised trade unions has created a platform for VET policies within the tripartite Economic and Social Council.

The law of 2001 established both a National VET Council and a VET Centre. Political shifts have subsumed the former into an Education Board and severely limited the role of the VET Centre. The financial analysis of CARDS VET I estimated that accomplishing the tasks set would require a budget at least five times greater than that allocated by the government of the time. The development issues for both council and centre are not dissimilar to those in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (see the case study for that country).

A key objective of the reform of education and training in Serbia is to link education to economic reforms. Therefore, there is a perceived need to move the focus away from theoretical knowledge and towards practical, applied knowledge at the secondary education level. Employers, associations and economic chambers consider VET to be an important area. Harmonising different interests through social dialogue is seen as important in formal vocational education as well as in the entire field of non-formal education and adult education.

Between 2001 and 2008 the participation of social partners in education and training policy has been subject to the ups and downs of political processes. It is not yet defined by law, but is a matter of agreement on requirements that are defined in the (largely donor-led) reform processes, often with ministries as the main beneficiaries. Hence, the institutions that lead the development process also determine the extent and intensity of the participation of social partners, especially the participation of employers. In the field of VET, social partners are not involved in the legal regulation of initial training or adult education (continuing training). They are involved only at the policy or discussion level regarding future development. This situation is typical for both sectors (tourism and construction).

The main contribution of employers to the development of vocational education is their involvement in designing the general development of vocational education, the strategic planning of craft education, the definition of occupational standards, the definition of practice standards, final exams, the vocational matura, preparing and producing curricula, and making proposals for training programmes. Whether or not formal agreements exist, to make a full contribution to VET social partners need to accept their responsibilities while ensuring that the necessary assistance (including financial, administrative and managerial resources) is available.

Examples of social partnership in the development of occupational standards can also be found in the implementation of the VET Reform Programme Phase I and Phase II (CARDS). In 2004 the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia and SAE (the Serbian employers' association), supported by the VET reform programme, organised ISOR (the Identification of Sector Occupational Requirements) committees. The members were representatives of forward-looking Serbian companies in the agriculture, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, food processing, construction and health sectors. The task of these committees was to define employers' needs and support the education and training experts in defining educational profiles and occupational standards. It was also planned that these committees should work on a regular basis and would revise VET curricula when necessary.

One of the ISOR committees focused on the construction sector. Its findings and recommendations were sent to the VET Centre and a request was made to update profiles and curricula. Based on these recommendations, curricula were prepared for four new construction profiles (pilots). Unfortunately, these committees have not been institutionalised and their work ceased in 2005. The involvement of social partners in the tourism sector in the VET Reform Programme Phase II included activities in skill needs assessment and development of occupational standards. Based on the recommendations, particularly from employers, new profiles have been selected and occupational standards prepared for these profiles. Recent changes of government and priorities will hopefully help to restore this initiative.

There is strong engagement on the part of social partners in the construction school in Belgrade that was visited during the peer learning exercise. The school is very active in developing new curricula. Teachers visit companies regularly to monitor the training placements of students and the in-company mentors, and use these visits to update themselves on new technologies and to gain feedback on new curricula. Every month a company is invited to present new technological developments to the teachers. All current employers are competing for students and are very satisfied with their quality. As in Croatia, the companies offer scholarships to students, whom they subsequently employ for at least three years. Employers are on the school board, but trade unions are not active and are normally represented by a member of the teachers' trade union.

The Palace Hotel in Belgrade is run by teachers and students from a tourism school. It is the only such example in Serbia and is very popular among students. It allows for extensive practical training. The system provides for regular, on-the-spot, mentor feedback. The hotel is not seen as an 'unfair' competitor by other hotels because of its educational function. Moreover, its graduates find employment in the other hotels. It is a surviving example of the 'old' system.

The formal organisation of the final examinations for three-year VET provision in Serbia is an interesting arrangement that applies to all pilot profiles and curricula. The Examination Committee carries out an assessment of the competences attained. The committee consists of at least three members and three deputies. The committee members are:

- two teachers of vocational subjects, according to the educational profile to be assessed; one of them chairs the committee;
- one representative of employers or crafts enterprises in the relevant field.

The Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with the Serbian Association of Employers and the Institute for Educational Development/Centre for Vocational and Artistic Education (VET Centre) propose an employers' representative to be a member of the Examination Committee. Employers with whom the student has undertaken practical training cannot be members of the committee. The VET Centre maintains a database on committee members. Quite minor problems can hamper the smooth running of these arrangements. Schools may simply not be able to afford the travelling and per diem expenses of teachers from outside the school or of employers, especially if hotel expenses are involved. In the CARDS VET I project, experimental pilot schemes were given guarantees that they would be given the sums required for the project.

As stated above, social partners in Serbia are not involved in the legal regulation of initial and adult education. Social partners are involved only at the policy or discussion level regarding future developments. This situation is typical for both the tourism and construction sectors. The development of social partnership in VET has been the focus of some attention over much of the past two years. The Serbian Association of Employers has been engaged in reform initiatives. The most recent contributions have included participation in policy development groups, inputs to conferences, and assistance in the

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drafting of occupational requirements relating to profiles in initial training. Jointly with the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia they have organised branch-oriented committees to clarify demands on the initial training system. The Chamber of Commerce has been involved in similar activities and has been an active participant and initiator of training courses for the staff of enterprises. There are various individual examples of cooperation at the levels of local communities and municipalities, especially in the tourism sector, but they are not formally defined; this is also the case at regional level.

Regional branch offices of the Chamber of Commerce have initiated cooperation between vocational schools in those municipalities or regions in which employers were interested in tourist-training initiatives. Such cooperation involved carrying out practical work, providing scholarships for students, and employing students who had graduated from vocational schools. Although it is not formally or legally determined, the active participation of social partners at regional level in all discussions on the development of education has become common practice. However, formal obligations remain vague.

ANNEX 4: TURKEY

There is clear awareness among social partners in Turkey that in the face of increased global competition, joint efforts between the government and social partners are needed in order to ensure that enterprises' needs for a suitable labour force can be better met. Although the policy dialogue has been strongly steered by the government, there are also quite a number of bipartite initiatives. Social partners are well organised and have a tradition of social dialogue going back almost 50 years. There are three main employers' organisations and three trade unions. They are organised at national level and at sector level. The chambers play a more prominent role at regional level.

Legislation provides a supportive tool for social partner involvement. All the legal arrangements are aimed at developing a vision for a future Turkish education system and labour market. The legal arrangements on vocational education are based on three acts: Law No. 3308; Law No. 4702; and the VQA (Vocational Qualifications Authority) law, which supports the first two laws and is intended to enhance the implementation of the EQF (European Qualifications Framework).

Law No. 3308 (1986) adopted three basic approaches for the vocational education of the labour force in formal and non-formal vocational and technical education institutions. These are:

- apprenticeship training (dual system);
- the full and part-time school system;
- non-formal vocational education – professional courses.

Law No. 4702 (2001) amended some articles of Law No. 3308, principally:

- enabling students to progress to higher education;
- introducing adult apprenticeships;
- revising the duration of apprenticeships;
- enabling enterprises to conduct skill training courses.

The Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) is the most important recent output of this system. It plans to develop a national qualifications framework and ensure that qualifications are applied, documented and certificated in the same way for everyone.

Since the Education and Training Law of 1986, social partners have had a formal role to play in education and training, in particular in apprenticeships and general policy

discussions. Turkey has established tripartite VET and employment councils at national and provincial levels. In 2006 the law establishing the VQA was adopted. The VQA is governed and financed on a tripartite basis. Its main role is to develop a Turkish national qualification system, including OSSBs (Occupational Standards Sector Boards) and awarding bodies for assessment and certification of qualifications. The EU project on Strengthening Vocational Education and Training (2003–07) helped to develop the practice of social dialogue in education, in particular in terms of labour market analysis, development of standards and curriculum, and policy development.

The Ministry of National Education is fully aware of the need for and relevance of involving the social partners in a number of phases of the education and training process. Social partners are heavily involved in policy development and participate in the National VET Council, a decision-making body that meets once a year. They are active in proposing agenda points for the meetings, and are mainly involved at an early stage of policy development. For example, the Ministry of National Education has developed its Action Plan 2008–12 based on a participatory approach.

The 2008 Employment Package announced that the VET and Employment Councils at provincial level are to be merged, recognising the broader perspective of education and training. With effect from autumn 2008 the provincial governors will chair the new councils. More activities are taking place at local level. Most have been initiated on the basis of informal contacts between companies and schools. The vocational schools are well aware that it is necessary to improve communication between themselves and the social partners who represent particular sectors. Most contacts seem to be informal rather than formal.

Both tourism and construction are important and, up to now, rapidly growing economic sectors of the Turkish economy. Both employ over one million workers. Informality, seasonal and temporary contracts, multi-skilling and immigration of foreign workers are common issues. While in construction the role of social partners is important, in tourism there is a much greater role for professional associations and the ministries. In both sectors initiatives include the part-funding of training institutions. The situation in the construction and tourism sectors is shared with the other three countries of South Eastern Europe. Students and parents alike share an unfavourable impression of the sectors, and there is a consequent lack of student numbers and a sense of disadvantage from those who are enrolled, especially those on three-year courses.

On more general issues the social partners in Turkey, especially employers, have similar opinions to those of social partners in the other three South Eastern Europe countries that took part in the ETF peer learning exercise. From their point of view vocational education in Turkey suffers from three main problems.

- Graduates do not have the qualifications required by enterprises because the curricula of vocational high schools are not sensitive to the changing workforce needs of enterprises, and enterprises are not sufficiently involved in steering the system. In addition, there are shortages of graduates in certain vocations.
- Because of the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the public system, enterprises have to make substantial investments that are not cost-effective.
- A portion of the taxes collected from enterprises for the education system is used by the public sector for purposes that are outside their stated objectives. As a result the private sector, while fulfilling its legal obligations, has to find extra funds for education from its own resources, through their own education foundations, training centres and employee unions.

The development of the VQA, which is steered and funded on a tripartite basis, is an important challenge for social partnership. By choice, the Turkish qualification system is based on voluntary participation from the social partners. In 2007 a call for tender was

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launched for establishing the Occupational Standard Board for the construction sector. While problems remain, the development of the VQA has been one of the success stories of the EU-funded Strengthening Vocational Education and Training project.

Social partners in Turkey are aware that joint efforts between the government and social partners are needed to better meet the needs of enterprises for a suitable labour force. The direct organisational costs of the main employers and trade union bodies do not seem to be a major problem. Both the construction social partners and the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB) have been able to set up their own centres to supplement public VET provision, in order to either achieve better quality outcomes or compensate for labour shortages. Although the policy dialogue is heavily steered by the government, there are also a number of bipartite initiatives.

The Training Centre for Construction (TES) is a good example. Employers and trade unions in the construction sector have financed a budget of €6 million for buildings, equipment and basic staffing for a period of five years. After this period the TES is supposed to be self-funding. The curriculum for the TES is related to formal education and has been approved by the Ministry of National Education, but does not lead to a diploma.

The main aim of the TES is to meet the needs of the skilled workforce in the sector. However, it is necessary not only to educate and train individuals, but also to assess, recognise and certify their qualifications. The TES has been preparing training programmes based on occupational standards. The Turkish Union of Road, Construction and Building Workers (TYOL-İŞ) and the Turkish Employers Association of Construction Industries (INTES) have worked together. The costs associated directly with the sustainability of the education programmes are covered under the following headings:

- education materials and resources;
- staff education and training;
- establishing systems for curricula, and for assessment and certification;
- management for the first five years.

The programme was initially financed by the social partners. However, it has now established a self-financing education centre. It has used various financial resources in order to survive. Unemployment funds from the Turkish Employment Service (ISKUR) are being used to finance the training expenses of unemployed people and those newly employed in the sector.

The centre aims to diversify its financial resources in the future. This is based on a number of assumptions and expectations.

- Employers will finance the cost of assessment for those workers currently working in the construction sector.
- The centre will develop as an employment agent and provide services for both employees and employers, subject to a service charge.
- It is hoped that the government will help to fund the initial costs of similar centres.

Students at the Anatolian Hotel Management and Tourism Vocational High Schools undertake practical training in companies from the beginning of May to the end of September, a period of 20 weeks during the tourism sector's busiest period. Arrangements are made for these practical placements in hotels, agencies and restaurants in March. Vocational teachers are responsible for monitoring the students during their trainee education.

At the end of the second year, students at the TURSAB Istanbul Anatolian Hotel Management and Tourism Vocational High School undertake their trainee education at the

hotels or agencies in Istanbul, and the Ankara students in Ankara. As the cities are large there are various opportunities and consultant teachers can easily find training places, especially in Istanbul.

During the 20 weeks' training students have three weeks' vacation which is specified by agreement between the employer and the student. All the students are insured by the school under Law No. 3308, and enterprises on average pay students at least two-thirds of the minimum wage. Students work a minimum of eight hours a day and six days a week. They can work at the front desk, or in housekeeping, cooking or serving, according to their field of study. As a result of this training, most students can choose the speciality in which they wish to be employed. During these periods the vocational teachers work as consultants. At the end of the period of trainee education, the students have to prepare a dossier relating to their training experiences.

Another example of good practice is the initiative taken by the Chamber of Commerce in Eskisehir to establish a private regional vocational school. The starting point for this initiative was dissatisfaction with existing schools, although the Provincial Education Director mentioned that the schools in the region are considered to be some of the best in Turkey. The education authorities welcomed this initiative on the grounds that it contributes to the government's goals of doubling participation in VET and increasing private schooling from 2.5% to 10%.

Although the networks are widespread and well established, it seems that further improvements are needed in order to ensure the effective involvement of social partners. With the current interest of social partners it is vital to find ways of creating win-win situations, and for the Ministry of National Education to bring social partners closer to the formal education system. School governing boards could be an instrument for achieving this. The issues limiting effective participation are cited as the reluctance of the government to share power and the need for greater capacity on the part of the social partners to allow their effective involvement.

ACRONYMS

CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (Community programme to assist the Western Balkan countries)
ESA	Employment Service Agency
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISOR	identification of sector occupational requirements
NGO	non-governmental organisation
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
TES	Training Centre for Construction
TURSAB	Association of Turkish Travel Agencies
VET	vocational education and training
VQA	Vocational Qualifications Authority

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